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Comparison of Traditional and Video Mediated Learning of English: Tracking a New Approach

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Abstract

Nowadays technology plays an important role in our lives, and also technological tools such as computers, laptops and cellphones with camera; Therefore students and teachers may interact from a distance. Speaking skills can be developed using these tools. This paper used Skype software to improve these skills. In this study two groups were compared in order to discover the affects of this new technology on their English speaking skill. 12 students of intermediate level participated in each group. The data was analyzed through *t*-test. Results indicated that learning speaking skills through video chat has lots of advantages which makes it more beneficial.

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1. Introduction

Recently, open-type video mediate language learning, and free internet software such as Skype have enabled students to engage in authentic, student-centered, communicative activities such as voice and video chat via computer (Ryobe, 2008) The use of technology in various fields has been so successful and beneficial for teachers reaching particular goals, especially in education, and for those learning a foreign language and literature. These days, the significance of technology is seen and enjoyed in every step of our lives. Communication has never been so easily available and fun. The barrier of location for people in different parts of the world has been removed by

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some of the latest technologies such as the web, internet, mobile devices such as Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), iPhone etc. (Sarica & Cavus, 2008). Now most of the countries emphasize learning and applying the information and communication technology as the base of their educational systems (Amiri, 2012).

Students learn faster and easier than before because of the use of technology in educational institutions. It is quite clear that English has become a necessity today. In 1996 participation in web-based higher education courses was estimated to be 1 million students and projected to be 3 million by 2000 (Edelson, 1998). It is widely accepted that advances in information technology and new developments in learning science provide "opportunities to create well-designed, learner-centered, interactive, affordable, efficient, flexible e-learning environments" (Khan, 2005, p.168). These are all the things which are so needed in learning a foreign language. For this reason, it could be suggested that internet-mediated study is an alternative way of learning English (Amiri, 2012). Web-based technologies and powerful internet connections provide various new possibilities and latest trends for teachers and learners. Web-based learning, or e-learning, was initially referred to as technology-based, distance learning, or online education (Amiri, 2012). A variety of basic language skills can be developed with the help of web-based language learning activities. Nowadays almost all messenger services have audio functions, and technological equipments such as computers also have cameras on them. Thus, students can talk with their instructors and peers far away. Skype is a relatively newly emerging technology and the potential application of it to language and literature learning and teaching needs to be further explored (Wu, 2005). Also, students can speak with native speakers and compare and improve their pronunciation and speaking skills (Amiri et al., 2012). In addition, students can improve their literary knowledge by discussing intended literary works with native or native-like speakers of English, especially university professors.

Skype is an online service that allows its users to engage in screen sharing, as well as file transfer and in instant messaging. Skype users can also maintain conference calls with three individuals or more, and make video calls and voice calls to anyone else who uses Skype. It is easy to use and has good sound quality. Skype can also be used in English lessons. Skype English lessons are available online, are an ideal method of learning for individuals with a busy schedule, and are taught by teachers who are experienced and certified.

If students practice online every day, or even as little as once a week one-on-one or in small groups, they will develop oral communication skills and improve their confidence (Ryobe, 2008). In Iran, the traditional teaching method is still teacher-centred even in English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, and it is difficult to bring about a change. In this study we aim to introduce video based learning and its benefits to Iranian teachers and students.

2. Literature review

The use of technology in education has closely tracked the development of computers. Since their introduction in the late seventies, computers have improved in speed, power and ease of use. Decreasing prices have made it possible for more and more students, particularly those in post-secondary education, to purchase their own computers. Today, the use of laptop computers is ubiquitous on most college campuses. Access to the internet has put a wealth of resources just a few clicks away and has revolutionized the way instruction is delivered. More and more courses are available online and the use of internet for teacher-student communication has become a part of everyday life (Kurzweil Educational Systems, 2004).

Recent advances in internet and information technologies have become widely available for use in language teaching and learning. Both online and e-learning activities have continued to expand with alternatives to traditional face to face teaching and learning. Additionally, a significant amount of e-learning research has been devoted to producing e-content, constructing e-learning systems, and integrating technology to improve the learning process. Computer simulations incorporating synchronous chat functions can also motivate language learners who would otherwise be intimidated by face to face interactions to more actively participate (Ranalli, 2008; Freiermuth, 2002). Furthermore, computer-assisted language learning can promote collaborative learner-centered knowledge construction and offer a more comfortable and less threatening environment for interaction than that provided by

traditional classroom instruction and discussion (Dickinson et al., 2008; Warschauer, 1996).

Over the past few years, internet blogs have emerged as a new medium of communication and publication. Blogs offer an exciting new way to deliver individual opinions, share ideas with others, and interact and communicate on the internet. Blogs can be used as a collaborative tool for student groups, and instructors can use them as a medium for such tasks as delivering news, messages, and resources, encouraging discussion, and giving feedback and comments (Well, Pegler & Mason, 2005). Some scholars indicated that blogging enables students to adopt a range of cognitive and social learning skills, as well as to develop reflective learning strategies (Birch & Volkov, 2007; Hourigan & Murray, 2010). Alm (2009) also concluded that blogging can positively affect learners' willingness to communicate by providing them with a personal space where they feel safe to express themselves and to interact with others. Computer communications make it possible to open a window of the classroom to the wider world. These studies can help us to understand how web conferences fit into the larger experience of learning EFL. Comparisons can also tell us what we might reasonably expect to gain from using video-based network learning in our own classes.

In conclusion, English language teaching no longer consists simply of traditional face to face classroom instruction, even though many educators may be unaware that an integrated approach to language teaching is commonly employed (Shih, 2010).

Research question:

How video-mediated software could influence on learning speaking skills?

3. Methodology

In this study two groups of traditional and experimental students at intermediate level were taught and their improvement of learning compared. Each group comprised of 12 students. Materials included traveling, shopping, dating, the use of internet; hobbies, culture, migration and marriage were discussed at 12 sessions. The first group did not need computer equipments whilst experimental group needed a computer equipped with camera and microphone, and a high speed internet. Skype or one of video chat software should be installed on the computers. The students in the second group were informed about the use of the software. They were divided in groups of four in order to facilitate the teaching. Students were prepared with the topic for next session directly in traditional group versus email in experimental class. A teacher evaluated their work during each session and their pronunciation and grammar errors were corrected. Each session lasted one hour for traditional and thirty minutes for second group. Finally, their acquisitions were evaluated in an interview based on the taught materials and the grades were scored. Recorded data were analysed using SPSS version 16.0, using Independent Sample *t*-test method and the results were assessed.

4. Results and discussion

The results from the *t*-test (Table 1) showed that the group given network-based pedagogy showed more improvement in speaking skill, and that this difference was statistically significance at $p = 0.03$.

Table 1. The results from independent sample *t*-Test.

Group Statistics

	VAR0001	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	1	12	14.8125	1.76173	.50857
	2	12	13.0000	2.05327	.58273

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	.255	.618	2.321	22	.030	1.81250	.78100	.19280	3.43220
	Equal variances not assumed			2.321	21.504	.030	1.81250	.78100	.19063	3.43437

Literature searches show that although the most popular way of teaching in Iran and also other countries is traditional face-to-face method, it is not the best way (Al-Hassan, 2010, Chhabra, 2012). There are advantages with the use of video chat in learning which are discussed in details below.

In this study we chose the software such as: Skype and Oovoo, which are free online video chat soft wares with simple accessibility and installation. They have high voice and video quality; the telephone call facility was unfortunately not available in Iran. The user also needs a high speed internet network to profit from this technology. In spite of access to high speed internet network, most students participating in this research were not familiar with new communication technologies i.e. video chat software. It therefore took some time to introduce these kinds of software to them. After while, the students found this method interesting and it was clear that they enjoyed speaking by video chat. Their affective filters were decreased and they encouraged participating in the discussion. Also, as teacher is not sitting next to them, they breathe easily and have time to think. Albeit the students in traditional group were provided with materials before class, they avoided speaking in front of the class. They did not like to participate in the discussions and their shyness in front of teacher and other classmates was undeniable. One of the students explained that he did practice the materials, but when he was expected to participate in the class discussion, he suddenly forgot everything. One of the most important aspects of using video chat was the ability to record the student's performance and document speaking mistakes. Students could observe their own posture, gesture and facial expressions, and also solve their grammatical and pronunciation problems by rehearsing their own video log. Therefore reviewing their video logs helped them to understand their own weaknesses and strengths while speaking. Liang (2010) and Warschauer (1996) suggested that online peer feedback as an alternative to face to face communication can increase learner motivation, participation, and collaboration. As Ranlli (2008) pointed out, computer-assisted simulation and learning activities can help to foster cooperative learning among students and to enhance opportunities for language use. Also Tsukamoto, Nuspliger & Senzaki (2009) reported that their students spoke more English during the web conferences than usual.

The most important challenge of video-based learning is broken connection and uneven video and audio quality.

5. Conclusion

This research showed that, comparing to the traditional learning, video-based network is an effective and facilitative way for learning speaking skills. It is hoped that in the future, utilization of technology for learning English will be increased and more research done in this regard.

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